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ABSTRACT

A study of English nouns derived from verbs and ending in "-ee" is outlined. The objective was to determine whether those nouns exhibit verbal characteristics (aspectual, temporal, or modal) that can be attributed to their derivation from verbs. The study examined 209 nouns. Progress made in the investigation of four hypotheses is described. The hypotheses are: (1) the suffix "-ee" is the surface reflex of an underlying case role combined with the basic verb from which the noun is derived; (2) deverbal nouns in "-ee" contain certain aspectual markers as part of their meaning; (3) an "-ee" noun is coined, together with its corresponding agent noun in "-er/-or," as the ad hoc name of one of the participants in a situation, the human being who is in some way acted upon; and (4) with some important exceptions, "-ee" nouns denoting persons subject to a change of status are most likely to be idiomatized. (MSE)

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THE SEMANTICS AND PRAGMATICS OF DEVERBAL NOUNS ENDING IN -EE
A REPORT ON WORK IN PROGRESS

This piece of research is a development of part of my thesis on the meaning of compound nouns with deverbal heads (Flognfeldt 1982). The study of deverbal nouns in -EE serves as an illustration of problems that were taken up in the thesis and which will be investigated further in my planned project on the meaning of adjective-deverbal noun collocations.

PRESENTATION OF PROBLEM AND PREVIOUS RESEARCH

In my thesis, I discussed a few examples of deverbal nouns ending in -EE, which I called 'patient nouns', and which others have termed 'passive nouns'.[1] Examples of the type are appointee, employee, and draftee. In the data on which I based my semantic analysis, only two compound nouns of this type occurred: Carter appointee and government employee. The general objective of my investigation was to determine whether these nouns exhibit certain verbal characteristics - aspectual, temporal, or modal features - which can be attributed to their history as derivations from verbs. I analysed the nouns in terms of Fillmore's case theory, seeing the suffix -EE as the surface reflex of an underlying case role 'patient'. The relation between the underlying verb, its associated case roles, and the patient noun is illustrated by the following semantic representation:

(1) [APPOINT] agent, patient → [APPOINT-EE] patient

The modifiers in the compounds (i.e. Carter, government) were then said to specify the 'agent' role in the underlying semantic representation. In addition, I argued that deverbal nouns like appointee embody 'perfective aktionsart' with its concomitant temporal feature [anterior action]; in other words, the meaning that is paraphrasable as 'sb who has been V+ED by sb'.

My present task is to extend the analysis to a much larger number of data, to see whether any general claims can be made regarding the meaning of de-

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verbal nouns in -EE. For this purpose I have collected a total number of 209 -EE nouns from various sources.[2] I have included in this collection (see the Appendix at the end of this report) nouns which are native deverbal formations and which are not marked in the dictionaries as obsolete. Many of the occurrences are nonce words which have been coined for a particular, often humorous, effect.

Most of the earliest recorded -EE nouns were Anglo-French legal terms, like vouchee (1485), grantee (1491), indictee (1581), the ending being the anglicized French past participle -é(e), used as a noun.[3] But ever since the suffix became a naturalized English formative in the 17th century, forming new nouns from native verbs, it has been fairly productive. Over the centuries non-legal nouns have been created as well, e.g. cheatee, examinee, testee. And new ones are coined all the time. Bolinger (1941) records crack-upee, bombee; Barnhart et al. (1973) give adaptee, and curee; and I have come across leakee (1976) and abortee (1980).

It is interesting to note that the coiner of a new -EE noun is often quite conscious and explicit about what he/she is doing, as a few illustrations will show (my underlining throughout):

(2) The cheater and the cheatee (to parody law-jargon) are equally enjoying themselves.

(3) An ingenious crammee - if we may be allowed the convenient coinage - will, with equal facility, assimilate, reproduce, and forget.

(4) ...and that will please you no end - refusal to cooperate will point the finger of suspicion at the refusee, if that's the word I want.

Some writers do not altogether appreciate the novel -EE nouns:

(5) How many amputees were there, General Bradley wanted to know, resorting to a ghastly form that has given us, also, trainees, dischargees, and retirees.

Others welcome the form:

(6) Describee is a happy specimen of a whole series of words much needed in our language.

I have divided my data into 12 preliminary categories or semantic fields (see the Appendix). Some fields could have been subdivided; we could, for instance, have a subgroup ENTERTAINMENT within the general category SOCIAL INTERACTION to comprise jocular terms like gaggee, jokee, jestee, laughee. Moreover, some -EE nouns have developed specialized senses and must be placed in more than one category, like for instance refer(r)ee, committee, transferee.

The only extensive study of deverbal nouns in -EE is Bengtsson (1927). Her collection of data from the earliest occurrences onward is in itself invaluable for a student of these nouns. Scholars like Jespersen and Marchand have built on her study, discussing more recent coinages as well. Bengtsson distinguishes two major types with regard to the relation between the 'actee' and the action:

I DIRECT PASSIVE NOUNS, denoting the direct object of the action implied in the corresponding verb: e.g. examinee, paraphrased as 'a person who is examined';

II INDIRECT PASSIVE NOUNS, denoting the indirect object of the implied action. This second type is further subdivided into two kinds:
(a) NON-PREPOSITIONAL INDIRECT PASSIVE NOUNS: grantee, 'a person who is granted something', and
(b) PREPOSITIONAL INDIRECT PASSIVE NOUNS: laughee, 'a person who is laughed at'.

There is a group of -EE nouns which she does not include, naturally, as passive nouns, but which have to be accounted for as well, i.e. words like escapee, retiree, returnee, and crack-upee. I think we lose an important generalization if we analyse and classify -EE nouns according to which surface syntactic paraphrase they will allow. If we establish a type for every prepositional construction we need, in addition to the non-prepositional ones, we shall have to operate with an unnecessarily large number of types.

A felicitous analysis of the meaning of deverbal -EE nouns will have to take into account not only Fillmore's (1977) 'relational notions' (i.e. the basic case relationship between a given noun phrase and the verb), but also his 'categorial notions', like HUMANNESS and CHANGE. Out of the total of 209 nouns, only one refers exclusively to an animal (vivisectee). Almost all deverbal nouns in -EE, then, refer to human beings. The categorial notion of CHANGE seems to be particularly salient in connection with the question of lexicalization or idiomatization of -EE nouns. Furthermore, the notion of CHANGE is intimately linked up with the aspectual feature 'perfective aktionsart', which is part of the meaning of a number of established -EE nouns, including the group that cannot be classified as either patient nouns or passive nouns: escapee, retiree, etc..

PRESENT WORKING HYPOTHESIS

My working hypothesis involves the following four aspects:

(1) The suffix -EE is the surface reflex of an underlying case role combined with the basic verb from which the noun is derived.

(2) Deverbal nouns in -EE contain certain aspectual markers as part of their

meaning. They can be seen to embody one of three aktionsarten: 'perfective', 'progressive', or 'neutral' aktionsart. Temporal and modal distinctions, insofar as they relate to these aktionsarten, are involved as well.

(3) An -EE noun is coined, together with its corresponding agent noun in -ER/-OR, as the *ad hoc* name of one of the participants in a situation, the human being who is in some way acted upon, the actee.

(4) With some important exceptions (for example, examinee, and trainee), -EE nouns denoting persons who are subject to a change of status are most likely to be idiomatized. The notion of CHANGE is a particularly salient feature from the point of view of idiomatization.

DISCUSSION

I shall discuss a few points relating to the four aspects of my hypothesis in the order presented. At the present stage of my work, I have not been able to conduct an exhaustive study of all the nouns.

(1) Underlying case roles

In a conceptualized situation, what are the roles human beings can play that will be lexically designated by an -EE noun? As a first approximation, we can say that it is any being who is acted upon, in one way or another, by an agent. Bengtsson's 'actee' could be a cover term for the majority of instances. But a closer study of the nouns reveals that they specify or 'perspectivize' diverse case roles.[4] The variety of defining syntactic paraphrases the nouns allow is already an indication that more than one role is involved. Still, it is a fact that most of the nouns analysed so far refer to persons who are directly affected by an action; the nouns beatee, kickee, kissee, interviewee, detainee all denote persons who are manipulated by an implied agent. Thus, they can be said to perspectivize the PATIENT role.

A great number of -EE nouns perspectivize the actual or potential goal or receiver of an action, persons to whom or against whom an action is directed. Allottee, complainee, describee, advertisee are examples of this type. The majority of *legal* -EE nouns specify this RECIPIENT (or GOAL) role; they refer to people to whom something is abandoned, aliened, remitted, mortgaged, etc.. This is to be expected; in the world of law people are regularly given new rights, responsibilities, and so forth.

A small group of nouns pick out the person *from* whom something is taken. Clark and Clark (1979) operate with a LOCATUM role, designating the location of one thing with respect to another thing, either positively on, in, etc.,

or negatively, not-on, not-in, etc.. According to Clark and Clark, the denominal verb skin, for instance, as in skin the rabbit depicts the activity of removing something (skin, the parent noun), which had a location with respect to another thing (rabbit). It seems to me that -EE nouns like arrestee (='sb in whose hands sth is arrested'), borrowee ('sb from whom sth is borrowed'), and squeezee ('sb out of whom sth is squeezed') can be said to specify this LOCATUM role. As a fourth type, devotee and retardee seem to perspectivize an EXPERIENCER role, referring to associated emotional and mental states rather than actions. Finally, the non-conforming group consisting of escapee, crack-upee, retiree, and returnee must be said to denote the AGENTS of the associated actions. The nouns in this last category are not included by the common denominator 'actee'. They are perhaps too many to be simply explained away as the outcome of over-productiveness on the part of the formative. They do, however, have one important semantic feature in common with a great number of 'actee' nouns, and that is the component [completed action].

(2) Aktionsarten

It seems correct to say that the agent-denoting -EE nouns just mentioned must be paraphrased as 'sb who *has* escaped/cracked up/retired/returned'. In other words, the actions associated with the nouns are completed; a change is involved, a new state initiated. The meaning of these nouns, then, can be compared to what is called a 'statal passive', as for example in one of the readings of The doors were closed. Deverbal nouns like escapee embody perfective aktionsart. The aspectual marker [completed action] and consequently, the temporal feature [anterior action] are parts of their semantic make-up. This temporal notion is similar to what Lyons (1977) terms 'secondary tense', i.e. the expression of an action as past, or anterior, with respect to another action in the past. I take the modifiers in the sentences containing -EE nouns as an indication of the presence of inherent perfective aktionsart in the nouns (italics mine):

(7) They want to go back to Russia...*Would-be* Soviet returnees...

(8) Now let us, the hangees *that are to be*, sift and examine this position.

(9) Samples of baked goods and frozen foods were given to *potential* franchisees.

The question of aktionsart is obviously dependent on the basic meaning of a given verb. Some verbs typically denote states, others acts or events, still others processes or activities. The point I would like to make is that a

number of the established -EE nouns appear to have perfective aktionsart. Some embody progressive aktionsart: trainee ('sb who *is being* trained'), and likewise educatee, examinee. It is the *undergoing* of the activities rather than completion that is captured by these -EE nouns. Note the modification in:

(10) It is the only piece of academical learning that the *finished* educatee retains.

These -EE nouns are parallel to deverbal -ING nouns, like crying, swimming, which denote unfolding, dynamic activities.

The third kind, 'neutral aktionsart', is the unmarked aktionsart, referring to actions that are neither in progress nor completed, i.e. not marked [+PROGRESSIVE] or [+PERFECTIVE]. Neutral aktionsart implies such aspectual notions as ITERATIVE, FREQUENTATIVE, and the related modal notion of proneness, readiness to perform certain activities regularly. Words like detainee and lovee embody neutral aktionsart. They refer to persons who are in the state of being detained or loved. Murderee denotes 'sb who has been murdered', but it also has the extended sense 'potential murder victim', which can be explained as an instance of neutral aktionsart:

(11) He's the real type of murderee...the obvious victim; he fairly invites maltreatment.

Lecturee denotes someone who goes to lectures regularly:

(12) They were the born lecturees; like Mrs. Wiggin, who had been attending classes for twenty years.

The semantic categories ABUSIVE/CRIMINAL CONDUCT and SOCIAL INTERACTION are especially rich in -EE nouns with progressive aktionsart, which are marked as *nonce words* or *rare* in the dictionaries. I shall discuss these presently.

(3) The coining of *ad hoc* relational opposites

The vast majority of -EE nouns crop up in sentences in combination with their corresponding relational opposites, or converse terms, agent nouns. Here are a couple of examples:

(13) A very necessary convenance interposed between visitor and visitee in those numerous calls of etiquette.

(14) It is not enough for the educator to pour fact after fact into the educatee.

There are two important points to bear in mind in connection with the opposites agent nouns and actee nouns. Firstly, agent nouns are essentially of

two kinds. One type denotes persons who carry out a profession regularly; the other denotes beings who are temporarily engaged in an activity. Typical examples of the former type are: baker, dancer, reporter in their profession-denoting sense. It is the latter type, however, which is especially relevant as the relational opposites of -EE nouns. In cases where there already exists an agent noun ending in -IST, -Ø, or -ANT, a new -ER noun may be coined to refer to a *temporary* agent. The agent noun in the following sentence is a temporary agent:

(15) Abortion is still a criminal offence for both the aborter and the abortee.

The corresponding professional agent is designated by abortionist.

The second important point relates to a significant notional difference between an agent, on the one hand, and the various kinds of actees on the other. An action is more intimately associated with the character of an agent; there is, so to speak, a direct relation of cause and effect. From the point of view of an actee, on the other hand, a given action will be only one among many that he/she is subjected to. For instance, an educator educates people for a living; an educatee plays that role only for a limited period of time. Similarly, a joker will probably crack jokes more than once; being a jokee is, on the other hand, a transitory predicament. This is probably part of the reason why comparatively few actee nouns become lexicalized as regular terms.

It seems that when relational opposites denoting temporary participants are coined, they reflect the tense and aspect of their containing sentences. They function as a kind of 'anaphora' (italics mine):

(16) Maybe, at first, he thought he could overhear the leaker and the leakee and catch them red-handed, *passing a secret*.

(17) ...a 'seeker'...*was being held* over the infernal flames by a thread or a hair. If the thread does not break, the suspendee is 'in the Lord'.

As names of participants in unfolding situations most new coinages appear to have progressive aktionsart. This also applies to cases where the underlying verb denotes a momentary action, but where a series of such events constitutes an activity: floggee, whippee, beatee. To decide whether the nouns refer to single events or a series on a given occasion is, of course, a pragmatic question.

(4) Idiomatization of -EE nouns

Scholars are generally aware of the transitory character of -EE nouns. It is

a fact that a great number of them are humorous nonce words which belong to the register of jargon. Some are terms of long standing, however, especially the legal terms. For an innovative -EE noun to get beyond the status of nonce word, it must probably depict something more than a temporary participant in a situation. Idiomatization is, of course, a matter of pragmatics. Some of the -EE nouns that *have* been idiomatized typically involve a state initiated by an event which is regarded as nameworthy and categorially necessary in a given world (law, business, politics, medicine, etc.). Amputee is an idiomatized -EE noun, as in the rather grotesque example:

(18) Put the patient both to bed. We shall see later which is the amputated part, and which the amputee.

Losing a limb, getting a job, a new right or responsibility are considered significant changes in our society. Likewise, being educated or trained for a job (educatee, trainee) make nameworthy roles as well, without there being any change involved.

At the present stage I have only been able to outline some of the issues that have to be investigated further in a semantic and pragmatic analysis of deverbal nouns in -EE.

NOTES

1. The term 'passive noun' is used by Bengtsson (1927), Jespersen (1965), and Marchand (1969).

2. Apart from the sources mentioned in the text, I have collected data from the following works: Oxford English Dictionary (1933) and Supplements (1972-82), Webster's Third New International Dictionary (1963), the Brown Corpus KWIC Concordance (1978), the LOB Corpus KWIC Concordance (1979), Barnhart et al. (1973), and Stillman (1965). I would like to thank Professor Stig Johansson for drawing my attention to recent coinages.

3. The dates in parentheses are the first occurrences given in the OED and recorded by Bengtsson (1927). The examples I shall be quoting are all taken from these sources, with the following exceptions:
(4) MacLean, A. 1980. Athabasca. 100.
(9) The New York Times. January 6. 1968. 39.
(15) Weldon, F. 1980. Female Friends. 212.
(16) Erlichman, J. 1976. The Company. 182.

4. I have adopted Fillmore's (1977:79) term 'perspectivizing' to refer to the process by which one particular case role is associated with a given verb to form a deverbal noun. In his paper, Fillmore is concerned with the case analysis of sentences rather than with word formation, however.

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APPENDIX: LIST OF DEVERBAL NOUNS IN -EE ARRANGED IN SEMANTIC CATEGORIES

LAW	SOCIAL INTERACTION	ABUSIVE/ CRIMINAL CONDUCT	BUSINESS/ ECONOMICS	POLITICS	MEDICINE/ SCIENCE
abandonee	amusee	abusee	advertisee	absentee	abortee
alienee	banteree	affrontee	bargainee	appointee	actee
allottee	boree	beatee	borrowee	committee +	adaptee
arrestee	callee	blackmailee	boycottee	conferee +	amputee
assessee	complimentee	bombee	consignee	consultee	causee
bailee	confidee	bribee	directee	contestee +	civilizee
chargee	congratulee	chasee	drawee	convenee	crack-upee
cognizee	describee	cheatee	employee	co-optee	curee
committee +[a)]	flirtee	cudgellee	endorsee	cuttee	deferee
complainee	gaggee	cursee	franchisee	designee	mesmerizee
conferee +	gazee	dumpee	hiree	expellee	operatee
depositee	hoaxee	eatee	licensee	leakee	retardee
detainee	honoree	flingee	loanee	meetee	testee
devisee	impressee	floggee	managee	nominee	transplantee
distrainee	interviewee	hangee	mergee	plottee	vaccinee
distributee	invitee	holdupee	moneylendee	pollee	vivisectee
divorcee	jestee	kickee	payee	preferee	
donatee	jokee	muggee	protectee	purgee	
escapee	kissee	murderee	retiree		
garnishee	laughee	pickpocketee	revisee		
grantee	lovee	provokee	transferee +		
insuree	nicknamee	raidee	vendee		
internee	noddee	revengee			
legatee	pattee	rubbee			
libellee	persuadee	seducee			
mortgagee	philantropee	sharkee			
objectee	promisee	shootee			
obligee	quizzee	slanderee			
parolee	refusee	sockee			
pawnee	sayee	squeezee			
petitionee	shavee	suspendee			
pledgee	standee	sweatee			
recoveree	staree	twistee			
refer(r)ee +	succouree	whippee			
releasee	toastee				
remittee	treatee				
supervisee	visitee				
transferee +	wishee				
trustee					
vouchee					
warrantee					

APPENDIX continued

MILITARY/WAR	EDUCATION	WRITING	CHURCH	TRAVEL	CONTEST	???
conscriptee	advisee	addressee	baptizee	departee	challengee	permittee
deportee	coachee	biographee	collatee	drivee	contestee +	throwee
dischargee	crammee	citee	confessee	embarkee	refer(r)ee +	
draftee	educatee	dedicatee	confirmee	luggee	tryoutee	
enlistee	examinee	quotee	devotee	returnee		
enrollee	exchangee	sendee	illuminee			
evacuee	lecturee	writee				
inductee	rushee					
pillagee	trainee					
rejectee						
selectee						
signallee						

a) A '+' indicates that the noun has been placed in more than one category.